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RUSSIA'S HYBRID APPROACH:
WHAT CAN NATO DO TO SHARPEN ITS SWORD AGAINST IT?

by

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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel Juby is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. Before school, she was the Commander of the 23rd Training Squadron at Officer Training School, Maxwell AFB, AL. As the Commander of the Air Force Commissioned Officer Training (COT) and Reserve COT programs, she was responsible for initial officership and leadership training for approximately 1,600 newly commissioned chaplains, health professionals, and judge advocates annually. Lieutenant Colonel Juby entered the Air Force in 1995 as a graduate of the University of Cincinnati ROTC program with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science. She possesses a broad operational background as an F-16 pilot with combat time logged in Operations SOUTHERN WATCH and IRAQI FREEDOM. Before becoming a commander, she was the Executive Officer to the Commander, Air Combat Command, Langley AFB, VA. As a strategist, she contributed to the Combat Air Forces strategic plan and programming guidance. She was tasked as a strategy specialist to the Office of Defense Cooperation Division, European Command in 2010 to ensure policy and strategy linkage within a 51-country Area of Responsibility.

Abstract

Russia's long, volatile history has been shaped in part by violent struggles using the proverbial sword to maintain its survival and territorial integrity. Russian President Vladimir Putin prefers to cloak his sword under an array of hybrid tools such as misinformation, cyber attacks and special purpose forces intended to create ambiguity while attempting to discredit the very promises that underpin international security institutions, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Despite the proven effectiveness of Putin's hybrid approach as seen in Ukraine in 2014, there are diplomatic and informational actions that NATO can employ to blunt Putin's sword. In Putin's hybrid approach, information is being used as an ambiguous weapon with effective results, unlike the more clear-cut conventional approach outcomes. Within that context, a comprehensive communication campaign to counter Putin's misinformation is imperative. At the heart of this strategic campaign should be substantial counter-information operations and information defense intended not only to prepare the Alliance members and partners for Russia's actions but also to expose Putin's misinformation. Most importantly, NATO must ensure indestructible resilience across the Alliance and strengthen relationships with strategic partners such as the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). To reinforce this effort, NATO should revise the Article V verbiage to include the use of hybrid tools and explicitly articulate what will trigger an Article V response. Without it, NATO could find itself ill-prepared to deal with Putin's next ambiguous engagement that may very well be within NATO's borders. The result could be, at best, a weakened Alliance, shaken by uncertainty of the collective defense of its trusting members. In the worst case scenario, Putin succeeds at permanently shattering the venerable North Atlantic security establishment.

“He must always keep an eye on his opponent so that he does not, if the latter has taken up a sharp sword, approach him armed only with an ornamental rapier.”¹

- Carl von Clausewitz

Russia’s long, volatile history has been shaped in part by violent struggles using the proverbial sword to maintain its survival and territorial integrity. Russia’s sword today displays a distracting ornamental exterior, while still retaining the piercing qualities from the days of old. Russian President Vladimir Putin prefers to cloak his “sharp sword” under an array of hybrid tools such as misinformation, cyber attacks and special purpose forces intended to create ambiguity while attempting to discredit the very promises that underpin international security institutions, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Riled by NATO’s expansion into his sphere of influence, Putin utilizes these tools by propagating pro-Russian misinformation in areas with larger ethnic Russian populations while conveniently looking the other way while Russian hackers attack former Soviet republics’ electronic infrastructure. Although Ukraine is not currently in NATO, it is of deep historical significance to Moscow; the Russian elites view keeping Ukraine in Russia’s orbit a vital national interest. The world largely stood by and watched as Putin’s misinformation operations and unmarked special purpose forces set the stage there for an illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula in 2014. Despite the proven effectiveness of Putin’s hybrid approach in Ukraine, there are diplomatic and informational actions that NATO can employ to blunt Putin’s cloaked sword.

Russia’s Struggle for Survival and Territorial Integrity

Following Napoleon’s defeat, Russia emerged as a great European power and an influential player on the world stage. Even so, “Britain nibbled at the extremities of the Russian territory” in the 1853-1854 Crimean war, leaving ethnic Russians on the peninsula under British

control.² This was neither the first nor the last instance of foreign intervention with respect to Russia's borders. Throughout the nineteenth century, Russia utilized both military might and diplomacy to maintain its survival and sphere of influence in the region. In 1917, while Russia internally struggled for its very survival as a nation during the revolution, externally, Russia's sovereign borders were being drawn by the remaining great powers. After World War II, Russia regained control of the Baltic states and Ukraine and maintained it until the collapse of the empire in 1991. As the post-imperial dust settled, the "near abroad" former Soviet republics quickly sought and, in numerous cases, were granted independence. The once-great Russian empire crumbled, leaving behind many ethnic Russians on the opposite side of new borders. NATO subsequently welcomed new members from among former Warsaw Pact satellites of the Soviet Union as well as the three Baltic republics. Yet, as Western leaders celebrated the spread of democratic ideals throughout this region, regional specialists were already predicting a Russian revival claiming, "Russia can be expected to attempt to balance the growth of Western power in the post-Soviet space and to compete for influence in the region."³

"The westward orientation of former Soviet republics poses economic and geopolitical risks to Russia's drive for renewed status as a great power."⁴

Out of this historical context grew an increased sense of insecurity in the Kremlin, Moscow having lost many of its western republics together with its status as a great power. Russia has maintained a deliberate interest in strategically relevant former Soviet republics and favors a wide range of strategies to maintain footholds in them. Moscow's hybrid tools, including misinformation, cyber attacks and special purpose forces, evolved to counter perceived threats to Russia's survival and territorial integrity, particularly in the face of the strength of

NATO. The term “hybrid” encompasses a combination of the following Department of Defense commonly defined terms:

Irregular Warfare	A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Also called IW. ⁵
Asymmetric	In military operations the application of dissimilar strategies, tactics, capabilities, and methods to circumvent or negate an opponent’s strengths while exploiting his weaknesses. ⁶
Unconventional Warfare	Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area. Also called UW. ⁷

Likewise, the phrase “ambiguous warfare” can be used to summarize similar actions. Ambiguous warfare “involves rapidly generating highly trained and disciplined forces who enter the battle space out of uniform and, in coordination with local supporters, utilize psychological operations, intimidation, and bribery to undermine resistance.”⁸ Finally, the 2015 Joint Strategy Review Report refers to “Gray Zone Conflicts” as the “purposeful, aggressive, ambiguous, and integrated use of multiple elements of power to achieve political or economic objectives, by a state or non-state actor, exceeding the threshold of normal competition yet falling below the level of major war.”⁹ Putin’s combinations of these concepts frame his hybrid approach. They are designed to exploit ambiguity and assure Russia’s survival and territorial integrity while evading a NATO reaction.

Russia’s hybrid tools weave the fabric of its overall military doctrine. In February 2013, General Valery Gerasimov, Russia’s Chief of the General Staff, claimed,

*The role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness...The broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other nonmilitary measures...is supplemented by military means of a concealed character, including carrying out actions of informational conflict and the actions of special operations forces.*¹⁰

Putin successfully employed these tools in Ukraine, operating in obscurity and rendering a suitable and timely Western response extremely difficult. Under the pretense of protecting ethnic Russians wherever they are, Moscow applied several of these concepts to slice away the Crimean peninsula and assault eastern Ukraine right under the international community's nose. Although Ukraine is not a NATO member, this situation highlights several questions: if Putin could effectively pull this off in Ukraine, who will be next? If the next target is a NATO member, how can NATO respond? An examination of Putin's recent use of hybrid tools throughout his neighborhood underscores the trepidation.

Russia's Recent Use of the Hybrid Approach

Although the Kremlin has long controlled the media and employed propaganda shamelessly, this is especially relevant in an age of almost immediate access to information to much of the world's population. For example, aimed at the large ethnic Russian populations in Latvia and Estonia, "Moscow's large TV, radio and internet presence is part of a hybrid battle for the Baltic hearts and minds."¹¹ Messages of nationalist sentiment are intended to keep pro-Russian (and pro-Putin) attitudes in the forefront. RT, originally named Russia Today, is a Russian government-funded television network that maintains television channels and Internet affiliates directed at audiences outside of the Russian Federation (RT claims to have an audience of nearly 600 million).¹² Some of Putin's "information army" pose as journalists who appear on RT as "experts."¹³ The goal is to obscure the truth by spreading alternative versions of reality; this is designed to shed a positive light on Russia, distract audiences and discredit Western sources. The Kremlin's latest propaganda effort—dubbed "Sputnik"—has opened at least 29 new media offices across Central and Western Europe, and is even setting up shop in Latin

America.¹⁴ Moreover, Putin's "online trolls work out of an office called the 'Internet Research Center' in St. Petersburg, blogging in 12-hour shifts to keep the propaganda flowing 24/7."¹⁵

Combined with this type of misinformation, cyber attacks present an equally dangerous element of Russia's hybrid repertoire. Estonia's information technology experts were caught off guard and national security "was threatened in April 2007 when a near-catastrophic botnet struck almost the entire electronic infrastructure of Estonia."¹⁶ Sparked by the decision to move a Soviet World War II memorial from central Tallinn to a military cemetery, the attacks lasted three weeks and sought to bring down critical communications capabilities and infrastructure nodes. Not only do Estonian citizens rely heavily on e-commerce and online transactions, but the country's leaders also use online briefings as a primary means of informing the public. At first Tallinn's leadership could not post messages on the government's websites, then quickly realized the media outlets and the banking industry were also being targeted. Although the Russian government denied any official involvement, "a group of Russian hackers has taken responsibility for it."¹⁷ Furthermore, Russia has refused to join the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime, signifying a reluctance to cooperate with international cybersecurity initiatives. Undoubtedly, in a country so heavily reliant on the Internet for information and services, the denial-of-service attacks were particularly effective in Estonia.

Additionally, Georgia came in Moscow's crosshairs in 2008. Not surprisingly, "the issue of NATO membership...was the underlying cause of Russia's conflict with Georgia."¹⁸ Though the Russian armed forces packed an overwhelming conventional punch, Moscow did not miss the opportunity to spread misinformation. Putin ensured he would get the first strategic messages out; "the Russian government had flown some fifty Russian reporters to [the South Ossetia 'capital' of] Tskhinvali days before the war began."¹⁹ He controlled the messaging and

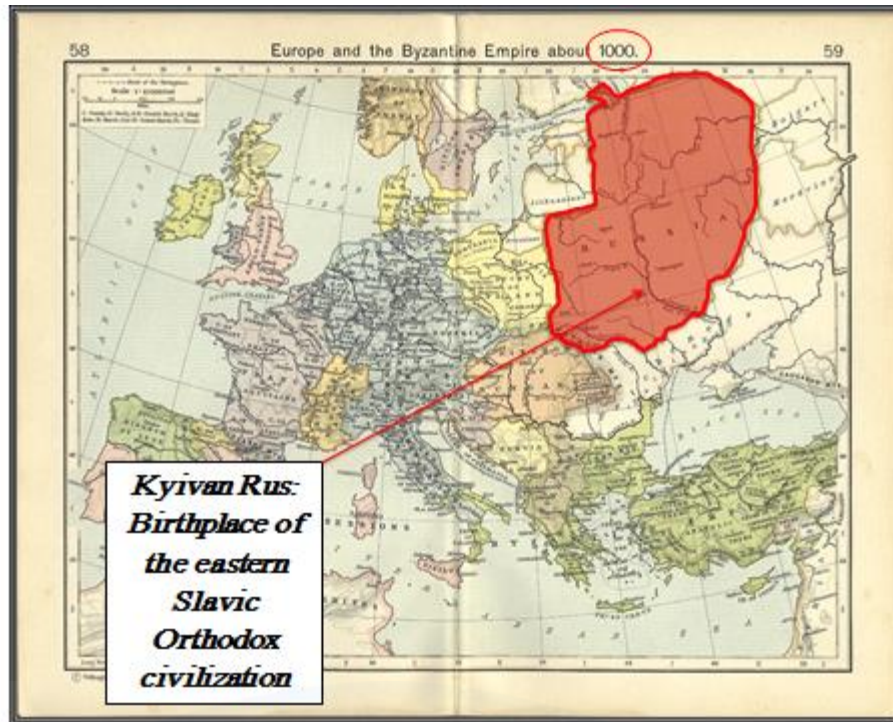
even Western reporters unknowingly began their reporting with crafted pro-Russia misinformation. “By roundly defeating a U.S. friend, the Russian leadership aimed to undermine Washington’s creditability as a security patron of pro-U.S. governments in the [Commonwealth of Independent States].”²⁰

A Case Study – The Russian Hybrid Approach in Ukraine

“The war in eastern Ukraine is a Kremlin-manufactured conflict. The war’s toll-6,200 dead, tens of thousands wounded and maimed, and over 1.2 million displaced persons-is the direct result of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s efforts to establish control over Ukraine.”²¹

- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

A closer look of Russia’s 2014 actions in Ukraine highlights Russia’s use of hybrid tools to accomplish its strategic objectives. Though General Philip Breedlove, USAF, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, acknowledged “[since] their occupation of Crimea, Russia has developed a very strong Anti-Access/Area Denial capability in the Black Sea,”²² the historical significance of Ukraine to Russia suggests there is more to Putin’s aggression. During the ninth century, the Eastern Slavs united under Varangian rule and created Kyivan Rus (pictured below), “a state from which present day Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia all trace their history of statehood.”²³ This was considered the birthplace of eastern Slavic Orthodoxy and the basis for the current dispute over Kyiv’s cultural legacy.²⁴ Ukraine was destined to be an enduring target of Putin’s hybrid strategy.



Map of Kyivan Rus²⁵

Pro-European mass protests, known as the Euromaidan, developed in Kyiv in the winter of 2014. Many Ukrainians desired closer integration with Europe and a corruption-free government chosen through a democratic election. Organized by elements of Ukraine's struggling civil society to protest the Ukrainian government's turn away from an Association Agreement with the European Union, the cause broadened and turned violent following brutal beatings of student protesters and implementation of antidemocratic legislation.²⁶ Ukraine's pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych fled Kyiv, leaving its security in tatters and its citizens to reestablish the government. Putin regarded this revolution as another instance of Western influence in his backyard and took advantage of a fractured society to wield his influence. His fear of a democratic stronghold in "Little Russia"²⁷ prompted him to use all means available towards his objective of reorienting Ukraine eastward.

As described above, Russia's state-dominated media also controlled the flow and content of information across much of eastern Ukraine. Putin's deliberate use of terms such as neo-

Nazis, Russophobes, anti-Semites, and Fascists to describe Kyiv's post-Yanukovych government was intended to frighten ethnic Russians and delegitimize western ideals.²⁸ "The Russian media has thus derided Ukraine and [the] nation's efforts to both move away from Russia and preserve its own sovereignty and territorial integrity."²⁹ This public agitation and delegitimizing of the interim government in Kyiv was the foundational phase of Putin's hybrid campaign in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russian equipment and special purpose forces in unmarked uniforms (referred to as "little green men"³⁰) funneled in under the guise of normal resupply activity through the Sevastopol base under lease to Russia until 2044.ⁱ Russian units maintained radio silence to avoid NATO's monitoring in the region. "Groups of unidentified armed men began appearing throughout the [Crimean] region, often in coordination with local pro-Russian militias"³¹ and seized government buildings, air bases and military installations. Moscow denied involvement and labeled these self-defense militias; in step with the misinformation already being spread, Putin proclaimed to the world that ethnic Russians were in danger in Ukraine. A pro-Russian mayor was put in place in Sevastopol that declared he would not accept orders from the "fascist, illegal" regime in Kyiv.³² The new authorities conducted an unmonitored vote on the status of Crimea yielding an improbable ninety-seven percent vote in favor of secession from Ukraine. Using a falsified referendum that was not internationally recognized, Putin signed a bill two days later annexing the peninsula to Russia.³³

Simultaneously, conventional Russian forces mobilized along the Ukrainian border as part of "snap exercises in the Western and Central Military Districts [of Russia]."³⁴ Additional unidentified armed men also appeared in the eastern Donbass region to assist local pro-Russian

ⁱ Charles Bartles and Roger McDermott, "Russia's Military Operation in Crimea: Road-Testing Rapid Reaction Capabilities," *Problems of Post-Communism*, November/December 2014, 48. These were largely naval infantry, Spetsnaz brigades, and airborne forces from the Russian Ministry of Defense.

rebels in taking control of key government institutions and infrastructure.ⁱⁱ “The Kremlin-supported authorities in Luhansk and Donetsk held their own illegal and unmonitored referendums, after which they declared independence from Ukraine.”³⁵ When it looked as though Ukrainian efforts to regain control over its eastern territories might prove successful, Putin was forced to commit conventional forces to hold the region surrounding the cities of Luhansk and Donetsk. Even as regular troops streamed in, Putin answered charges of aggression that these were Russian soldiers on their holiday or recently discharged servicemen, all there of their own accord.

Furthermore, in December 2015, three Ukrainian power firms confirmed the existence of BlackEnergy malware on their servers that caused power outages across the country. The same malware was reported in January 2016, from Ukraine’s largest airport, Boryspil. This attack is particularly menacing since the airport is responsible for over half of Ukraine’s air traffic. Although official investigations are ongoing at this time, these attacks are being attributed to Russian hackers and have information technology security experts scrambling to secure the country’s infrastructure from future attacks.

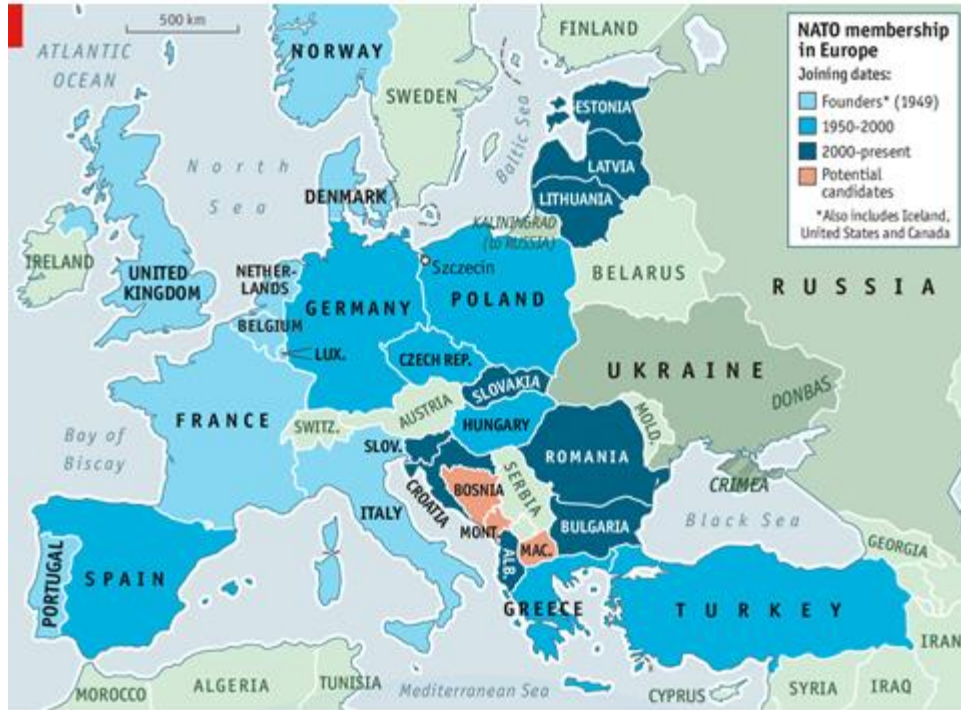
Atop the foundation built from Putin’s hybrid approach, Moscow “employed an unrelenting media campaign to reinforce the narrative that the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine needed to be rescued from right-wing ‘fascist’ extremists and chaos.”³⁶ Kremlin officials even blamed the deaths of its soldiers fighting in Ukraine on military exercises while truckloads of coffins marked “Cargo 200,” Russia’s military code for soldiers killed in action,

ⁱⁱ “Little Green Men,” 31-32. Rebels declared the People’s Republic of Donetsk and with the help of “Russian troops, intelligence personnel, and equipment, the rebels continued to seize buildings and hold their positions throughout the Donbass region.” In May, “rebels from the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts declared the establishment of New Russia, an area including southern and eastern Ukraine.”

crossed the Ukrainian/Russian border.³⁷ “The Russian government’s secrecy shows the importance of hiding the truth about the human toll of the Kremlin’s involvement in Eastern Ukraine from Russian Citizens”³⁸ as well as the rest of the world. Maintaining popular support throughout the Russian population is essential to Putin’s political power base. Though the 2015 ceasefire indicated a decrease (albeit not a termination) of the violent Russian intervention in Ukraine, Putin intends to continue to spin the story to his liking and employ his hybrid approach beneath the international radar to avoid NATO’s involvement in what he considers his domestic affairs.

Implications of Putin’s Methodology

Ukraine, with its large ethnic Russian population and unstable central government, gave Putin an opportunity test the West with his hybrid tools while isolating the new reformist administration in Kyiv. To Putin, “NATO is a code word for America in Europe, or more precisely the U.S.-led system of alliances and power infrastructure.”³⁹ Every time NATO addressed enlarging its membership to include former Soviet republics, particularly Georgia and Ukraine, Putin felt his sphere of influence called into question. Additionally, as regimes were challenged, and in some cases toppled, throughout the Arab Spring and so-called Color Revolutions, Putin and the Russian elites expressed concern this “democracy promotion” would spread to Russia. Moscow “resolved not to allow further Western encroachments into the territory it felt was its historical space.”⁴⁰ The following map depicts the evolution of NATO’s membership.



Source: *The Economist*

In response, Putin adeptly employs the non-military instruments of national power and focuses on the aforementioned hybrid approach to maintain his sphere of influence, and thus, Russia's physical security while staying below the threshold of NATO's Article V, the text of which appears below:

The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.⁴¹

Absent the nuclear trump card, experts generally consider Russia's military technologically inferior to the combined conventional military might of NATO. As Gerasimov noted, "widely used asymmetrical means can help to neutralize the enemy's military superiority."⁴² These

means are also designed to exploit ambiguity and delegitimize traditional security institutions, such as NATO. They do not clearly present themselves as “an armed attack” as Article V states. Instead, they are intended to indirectly prepare the “battlespace”, should one be required, all the while undermining the unity of the European community. As NATO determines what to do about Russia’s actions in Putin’s next area of interest, he could very well be on his way to securing his objectives without even mobilizing conventional forces or pulling the Article V trigger.

Recommended NATO Actions Using Diplomatic and Information Instruments of Power to Blunt Russia’s Hybrid Approach to Warfare

After the fall of the Soviet Union and the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact, many questioned the relevance of NATO in today’s globalized world. Though a valid question, it ignores the three primary reasons that still underlie the Alliance’s creation: “deterring Soviet [Russian] expansionism, forbidding the revival of a nationalist militarism in Europe...and encouraging European political integration.”⁴³ Putin’s recurrent use of hybrid tools against his neighbors serves as a reminder that although the cover of the book has changed, the pages still convey the same story of an expansionist great power. Russia clings to outdated notions of international relations, believing it is entitled to an exclusive sphere of influence. Only now, Moscow wields an ornamental, but still razor-sharp, sword to maintain its territory.

“Russia’s aggressive actions against Ukraine have fundamentally challenged our vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.”

- NATO 2014 Wales Summit Declaration

The quote above captures NATO’s clear understanding of the impact of Putin’s aggression on the post-1991 European order. Specifically, “the U.S. has security commitments with 27 NATO countries, several of which have been targeted by Russia...to prevent instability that

could spread armed conflict beyond Ukraine.”⁴⁴ The West has a vested interest in assuring NATO’s preparation for possible future hybrid incursions.

The immediate concern for NATO’s leadership is who Putin might target next or worse yet, who is already under assault by Russian hybrid methods. Two possible areas of concern are the Baltic states and the Black Sea region. Formerly under direct Soviet rule, with large ethnic Russian populations and each fielding small defense forces, the Baltic states of Estonia and Latvia make a potential target. Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, and Georgia also present targets of opportunity in the Black Sea region. These countries have vulnerabilities that Russia can use (or is using) for its own purposes. Whether it is pro-Russian enclaves (Transnistria in Moldova or Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia) or economic dependence (Bulgaria) Moscow can exploit these issues as a foot in the door. Additionally, Crimea is now literally a platform for Russian power projection in the region, should Moscow have to use its conventional force.⁴⁵ Given Russia’s behavior in the past decade, its neighbors have a valid reason to be nervous.

Nervous Neighbors

Russia's annexation of Crimea and rhetoric about defending ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in neighboring countries have raised concerns in a number of them. Here are some possible vulnerabilities:



Source: *The Wall Street Journal*

"If I wanted to, Russian troops could, in two days, be not only in Kiev but also in Riga, Vilnius, Tallinn, Warsaw, and Bucharest."

- Vladimir Putin to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, reported by EUOBSERVER, 18 Sept 2014

In addition to the initiatives from the 2014 Wales Summitⁱⁱⁱ, there are other options using the diplomatic and information instruments of power NATO can employ in order to deter or diminish the effects of Putin's possible next move. First, words do matter, particularly truthful ones. A comprehensive communication campaign to counter Putin's misinformation is imperative. The Chief of Strategic Communications at NATO's military headquarters, Mark

ⁱⁱⁱ Jim Garamone, "Breedlove Discusses Russian Threats in Europe," Department of Defense News, 18 August 2015, available at <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/603088>. Reassurance measures include bolstering the ongoing air policing mission and increased infantry exercises in the Baltics, additional ship transits through the Black Sea, and additional exercises of NATO air assets and infantry units in Poland.

Laity, contends changes in society and technology facilitate using non-kinetic techniques “in fresh ways to increasingly dramatic effect.”⁴⁶ Though NATO created a Strategic Communication cell (StratCom) within its military headquarters, the last directive published is ACO Directive 95-2 in 2010. This guidance requires an update and sharpened focus on a collective way forward.^{iv} At the heart of this strategic campaign should be substantial counter-information operations and information defense intended not only to prepare the Alliance members and partners for Russia’s actions but also to expose Putin’s misinformation. The importance of seizing the strategic narrative and assuring the accuracy of the information is being communicated to NATO and U.S. domestic audiences alike cannot be overstated. In Putin’s hybrid approach, information is being used as an ambiguous weapon with effective results, unlike the more clear-cut conventional approach outcomes.

Specifically in the U.S., where the media is clearly not controlled by the government, a whole of government approach that distributes clear, concise and standardized messaging is required. Since “the U.S. can help bring a free, fair and balanced press to these countries in which Putin is undermining truth and fact,”⁴⁷ the message needs to reflect NATO’s way forward and be proliferated across the media spectrum. Broadcasters funded by the U.S. government such as the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) are instrumental in providing the truth to countless citizens under Putin’s umbrella of misinformation. Ed Royce,

^{iv} “Redefining Euro-Atlantic Values and Russia's Strategic Communication in the Euro-Atlantic Space,” NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence Riga, Latvia, available at <http://www.stratcomcoe.org/redefining-euro-atlantic-values-and-russias-strategic-communication-euro-atlantic-space>. This 2016 research effort comes on the heels of an updated strategic communication directive and seeks to identify “how Russia with the help of mass media influences the Euro-Atlantic values and redefines the meaning of democracy, media freedom, human rights, trust to international organisations, freedom of speech and other values in the Euro-Atlantic space.”

chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, is a tremendous advocate for exposing Putin's misinformation. He invited Liz Wahl to speak to the Committee; she bravely "interrupted a live broadcast on March 5, 2014, to resign from RT's English-language television service, explaining she could not stand by its distorted coverage of Russia's occupation of Ukraine."⁴⁸ Royce contends,

Righting this ship must be an urgent foreign-policy priority. I will soon introduce bipartisan legislation to do just that. The bill would charge one U.S. broadcasting organization (VOA) with reporting U.S. policy and other global news, and another, including RFE/RL and similar services, to act as the free press in repressive societies like Russia.⁴⁹

Additionally, Maksymilian Czuperski, the Strategic Communications Advisor Europe and Special Assistant to the President of the Atlantic Council, succinctly outlines a strategy that involves NATO's largest ally – the public. In a recent US Senate Hearing on *Putin's Invasion of Ukraine and the Propaganda that Threatens Europe*, he concluded:

1. "The best antidote to misinformation in this hybrid war is clarity; to speak the truth but foremost to empower the public to reveal and communicate it clearly"⁵⁰
2. "Social media forensics and geolocation analysis are powerful tools: Information once available only to intelligence agencies is now available to all.^v We do not need to engage in an information war, rather we need to empower civil society, journalists and citizens to distinguish between fact and fiction. This matters because it can help overcome the healthy skepticism that the public may have toward official government narratives."⁵¹

Similarly, Ben Nimmo, a British specialist in analyzing information warfare, advocates for a proactive approach for "sponsoring the creation of a pool of knowledge and independent experts so that the next time a lie is broadcast, it can be challenged before it has time to spread too far."⁵²

^v Examples of the use digital forensics can be found in Czuperski's "Hiding in Plain Sight," 8-17.

His “information defense” model^{vi} reinforces Czuperski’s assertion that a key component in the battle against misinformation “is equipping and training journalists with these new methods to use in both their own countries and abroad.”⁵³

Most importantly, NATO must ensure indestructible resilience across the Alliance and strengthen relationships with strategic partners such as the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). To reinforce this effort, NATO should **“clearly articulate what counts as an attack under Article V.”**⁵⁴ For example, Estonia was nearly crippled by the cyber attack on its infrastructure in 2007. Although cyber security was addressed at the 2014 Wales Summit, the Alliance concluded that determination on whether a cyber attack on one of its members invokes Article V action would be made on a case-by-case basis.⁵⁵ Additionally, Russia’s “little green men” were successful in preparing Crimea for a Russian annexation long before the confirmed appearance of conventional forces on the eastern border. With Russia choosing not to cooperate with international cybersecurity initiatives and already skilled in the use of unmarked special purpose forces, revised Article V verbiage to address the use of hybrid tools is imperative. Without it, NATO could find itself ill-prepared to deal with Putin’s next ambiguous engagement that may very well be within NATO’s borders. The result could be, at best, a weakened Alliance, shaken by uncertainty of the collective defense of its trusting members. In the worst case scenario, Putin succeeds at permanently shattering the venerable North Atlantic security establishment.

It is not too late to lay down the ornamental rapier. By honing and clearly conveying the Article V language to include hybrid tools, NATO stands to bolster the alliance’s institutional

^{vi} Details of Nimmo’s Information Defence Model can be found in his article, “The Case for Information Defence: A Pre-Emptive Strategy for Dealing with the New Disinformation Wars,” 29-35.

trust and strategic relationships. A resolute strategic communication program that includes counter-information techniques and information defense will uncover Putin's misinformation and hamper his attempts to delegitimize Western institutions, create confusion and foster dissent. This will better prepare member countries and partners for Russia's hybrid approach as implemented in Ukraine - Putin is still exploiting these methodologies within NATO countries today. Finally, according to the U.S. Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, "Computer security studies assert that unspecified Russian cyber actors are developing means to access industrial control systems (ICS) remotely."⁵⁶ How will NATO respond to computer hackers controlling NATO Country X's electric power grids, urban mass-transit systems, air-traffic control, and oil and gas distribution networks? It's time to sharpen NATO's illustrious sword.

"We stand ready to act together and decisively to defend freedom and our shared values of individual liberty, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law."⁵⁷

- 2014 Wales Summit Declaration

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